

# Introduction

Caerleon is situated three miles to the north-east of Newport, on the north-west bank of the River Usk immediately to the south-west of the Afon Llwyd (ST 340906) (fig. 1).

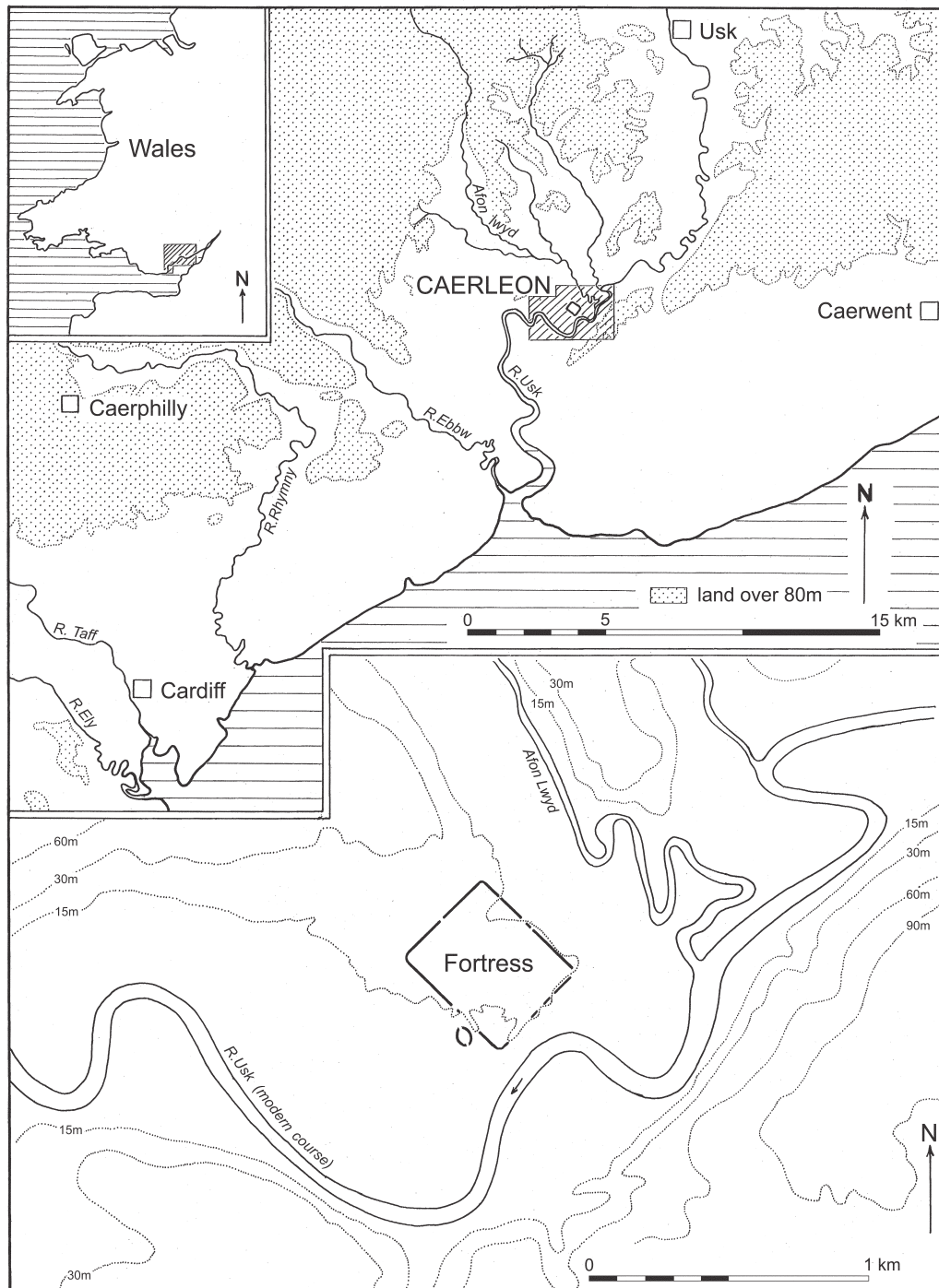


Fig. 1: The location of Caerleon

The present day town lies on the site of Isca one of the three permanent legionary fortresses in Roman Britain. The site is located at, what was in antiquity, the lowest convenient bridging

point of the Usk and was well situated for both supply by sea and river transport as well as the Roman road system. The general history and archaeology of Roman Caerleon is detailed elsewhere (e.g. Boon 1972; Boon 1987; Knight 1988).

The southern defences of the fortress lie within the Guardianship area of Caerleon. Early in 1982 the former Ancient Monuments branch of the then Department of the Environment (now Cadw) wished to present the south-western gate (*Porta principalis dextra*) to the southern corner of the fortress for display to the public. To make good damage caused by tree roots, the rampart wall was consolidated by masons. This consolidation work revealed that the internal deposits of the interval turret on the south-western wall closest to the southern corner, whose location had only previously been extrapolated, remained intact despite extensive robbing of its walls. Consequently, it was decided that because the southern section of the defences were the best preserved of the entire circuit, the excavation of both the interval turret and the southern corner turret was justified before further repairs were made to the walls and the two turrets to prepare them for public display. The excavations were conducted on behalf of the then Department of the Environment during July and August of 1982 using volunteers under the supervision of Howard Mason. Five trenches were dug and three sections of the rampart, as well as the interval turret and the corner turret, were excavated. In addition, several buildings which had been inserted into the rear of the rampart were partially uncovered although the parameters of the excavation precluded their full excavation.

The only significant previous work at the site was the excavation of the corner turret in 1909. Although a draft report had been prepared by King; the work remained unpublished until 1963 when G. C. Boon edited an account of the excavations (Bosanquet and King 1963) and re-evaluated the site (Boon 1963). The deposits in the interval turret which had been exposed by the Department of the Environment masons prior to excavation were recorded by Mr J. K. Knight, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for the Welsh Office. Whilst doing this he also recovered the sestertius of Trajan dated to A.D. 104 from the Phase III interval turret deposits<sup>1</sup>. Immediately prior to the excavations a watching brief was conducted by one of the authors (HM) during the machine removal of a brick built, Second World War fortification built over the southern corner. The lower parts of this recent fortification had been cut into the Roman deposits and it was revetted and supported at the front by a semi-circular stone-built structure, which was shown to have had part of an earlier, Phase VII, concentric feature.

After the excavations had finished, the Department of the Environment masons continued work along the south western part of the defences. Their work revealed the outlet of the main drain and a further interval tower which is one of the best preserved on the circuit. The position of these two features have been marked on fig. 2.

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1 See p. 47 no. 6

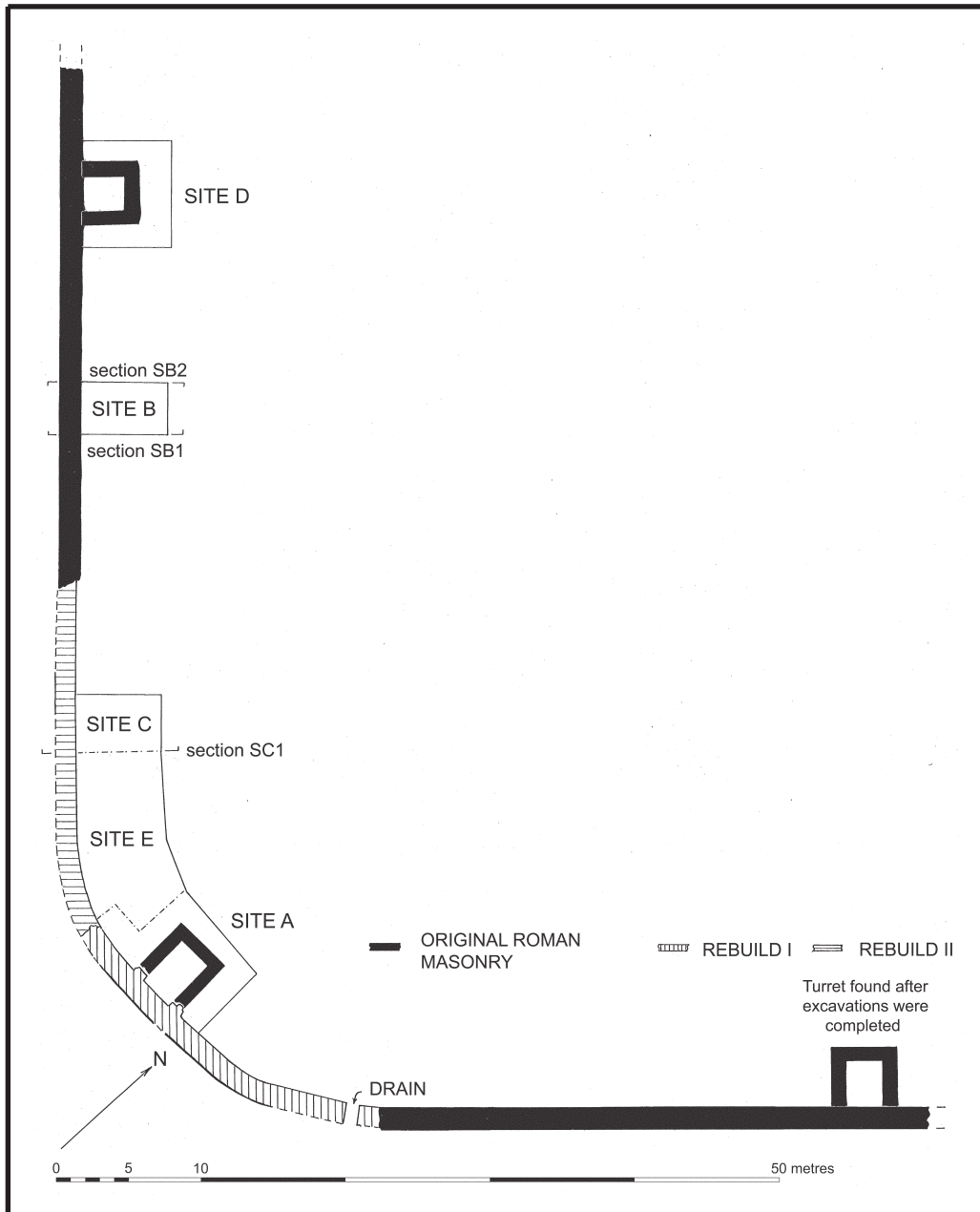


Fig. 2. Location of excavation trenches and southern corner rebuilds. The drain and the turret on the south western wall were found during the repairs to the curtain wall masonry after the excavations had finished.